

INST 154

Apollo at 50

Discussion Questions

Session 17: The Apollo 1 Fire

1. Different people reacted to the Apollo 1 fire differently. Everyone at your table should start by choosing a different person who had some reaction to the fire and explain to the others how that person reacted. Then use those examples as a basis for discussing what it was, beyond individual differences, that caused people to respond differently. Was there anything about someone's background that might influence how they would react? Or their responsibilities generally? Or their specific involvement in the actual events of that day?
2. Congress, in its oversight role, conducted hearings on the cause of the fire and on NASA's planned responses to what they had learned. Why did they do this? What were the results of their having done so? What might they have done differently?
3. One outcome of accident investigations is to learn technical things. Other outcomes are to learn things about failings of leadership, management, or review processes. What did NASA learn about those "softer" things from the accident? And if they learned them, why did similar deficiencies in leadership management, and review processes continue to be found after the subsequent Challenger and Columbia space shuttle accidents?